



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



Summer 2008

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What's New!

by Barb Ross

The Parent Information Network offers support for families throughout the special education process. We are delighted to announce the addition of two new PIN Specialists. Please join us in welcoming Cecilia Nelson, serving Cochise, Graham and Greenlee Counties, and Jill Castle, serving West Maricopa County. Cecilia resides in Sierra Vista with her two girls, ages 8 and 12. Cecilia says, "Being able to give back to my community in this way is truly a gift!" Jill resides in Scottsdale with her husband and two boys, ages 6 and 8. Jill states, "I feel privileged to be able to help parents navigate the education system and access resources so they can in turn help their child receive appropriate supports and services." Welcome aboard, Cecilia and Jill.

Scholarship Opportunity

Arizona's 8th Annual Transition Conference

"Transforming Visions to Realities"

September 22 - 23, 2008

Radisson Fort McDowell Resort



Youth (secondary transition-aged) and young adults with disabilities, as well as family members of students with disabilities, are invited to apply for a scholarship to attend this year's Transition Conference sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education/Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) and the Arizona Department of Economic Security/Rehabilitation Services Administration/Vocational Rehabilitation. Scholarships assist with the cost of registration, hotel lodging, or both. The application submission deadline is August 29, 2008 and scholarships will be awarded in the order in which the applications are received. For additional information about the scholarships, please contact Alissa Trollinger, Alissa.Trollinger@azed.gov or (602) 364-4004, or Jeannette Zemeida, Jeannette.Zemeida@azed.gov or (602) 542-3855. For more information about the conference, check out the ESS, Transition Services website www.ade.state.az.us/ess/SpecialProjects/transition/events.asp.

This is not the year to miss Arizona's Eighth Annual Transition Conference "Transforming Visions to Realities!" The conference will include an exciting venue of national speakers, state level experts, and active youth participation. Also featured this year will be entertainment for youth and young adults and a fabulous display of student artwork.

Preschool to Kindergarten Transition

by Jill Castle



Entering kindergarten is a rite of passage that can be daunting for any child and his/her parents, let alone if the child has a disability or is experiencing delays. At age five most children are able to separate from parents to attend school. For a child with a disability separation may or may not be a challenge. As with any transition, the more preparation done in advance, the smoother the transition for the child, parents, and everyone involved.

Many parents have other concerns regarding the successful adjustment of their child to a new classroom. Once the team has decided on an appropriate placement, the parents can ask to visit the new classroom, playground, cafeteria, or other areas of the school to help familiarize the student with the new school. Visiting the classroom to introduce the new teacher can be helpful. These visits may help ease anxieties for both child and parent. Another suggestion is to make a visual chart at home including a picture of the school, classroom, and if possible, the new teacher to prepare the child for the beginning of the year. Share with your child the differences they will encounter in daily routine, as well as environment, and provide them with examples.

Summertime is an excellent time for parents to prepare their child for kindergarten by reviewing their child's social, emotional, and developmental skills. Below are several basic skills that help ease children's transition into kindergarten:

- simple time concepts like understanding day and night and knowing their age
- counting to five
- recognizing basic shapes (e.g., squares, circles, and triangles)
- identifying body parts

To help prepare a child for reading, stop and ask questions about the content to develop comprehension, gradually increase the amount of reading in one sitting.

Parents can also access the kindergarten state standards and curriculum on the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) website: www.ade.az.gov/standards/contentstandards.asp. Be sure to check out the Early Childhood section of the Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC) for additional information on this topic.

A few documents with helpful information are: *Communication Between Parents, Child and Teacher (EC01)*, which is also available in Spanish (SP26); *80 Skills that Help Ease Kids Transition into Kindergarten (EC07)*; *Transition: Preschool to Kindergarten (EC10)*; *Helpful Hints from Kindergarten Teachers (EC06)*. PINC documents can be downloaded from the website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or you may contact your PIN Specialist listed on page four of this newsletter to receive a printed copy.

Elementary to Middle School Transition

by Jana Bays

The transition from elementary school to middle school centers on more than just academic changes and physical growth. Middle school students typically increase their independence in personal management, socialization, navigating the community, and self-advocacy skills. Parents and students need accurate information about the developmental changes that occur. Physical and emotional changes are most prominent. Parents can discuss any concerns or issues that arise with doctors, school nurses, school counselors or related service providers who can often provide insight during this complex stage of development. Parent support groups and community organizations can also provide additional support.



It can be difficult for the student transitioning to middle school from an elementary school setting. However, with help from his/her parents and educators, the transition can be smooth with few frustrations. Parents have a very important role to play in the transition process. Below are a several tips many parents have found helpful:

- Meet each teacher face-to-face. Ask for his/her contact information and a preferred method of communication (e.g., e-mail, phone).
- Help your child identify individual strengths and skills.
- Set up a time when you can walk your child through his/her schedule to find the easiest route to classes and to learn the layout of the campus.
- Find and access the school locker assigned to your child. Don't forget to include his/her P.E. locker.
- Locate the cafeteria and discuss lunch line procedures (i.e., money and lunch schedule).
- Ask if the school has a "buddy system" for new students.

Promoting self-determination is recognized as best practice in the education of adolescents with disabilities. Here are some suggestions to help students develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills:

- Students should attend and play an active part in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.
- Recognize his/her strengths and/or special skills.
- Discover individual learning styles and needed supports and services and share them with the IEP team.

- Learn and practice appropriate self-advocacy skills.
- Identify who on campus the student is to speak to about issues or concerns.

The Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC) document *Self-Evaluation Checklist (TR10)* is a very useful tool to help students discover their learning style, strengths, and challenges, as well as developing strategies that can be included in the IEP. A favorite document, *How to Get the Most Out of Your IEP (SA25)* is written from a 14-year-old student's perspective on participating in the IEP process. Tyler provides encouragement, as well as practical tips, on developing and practicing self-advocacy skills.

Incorporate any specific needs of the student into the IEP. Promoting self-determination focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students will need to take more control over and responsibility for their lives. Self-determination is a process that differs from person-to-person according to what each individual considers essential and/or desirable to create a rewarding and meaningful life.

Since adolescents are naturally trying out their 'wings', this makes self-determination the obvious first step on the road to post-secondary options. The PINC document *Fact Sheet: Summary of Self-Determination (SA13)* offers additional insight and information on this process. In addition, *Self-Determination and the Education of Students with Disabilities (SA14)* provides a systematic guide on how to get started. For more information on self-advocacy, self-determination, transition, or special education resources, contact your PIN Specialist or visit our website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN)



EAPN is the collaborative effort of parent groups, organizations and agencies that believe all children with special needs and their families should have access to information, support and training.

The EAPN website offers links to over 50 non-profit agencies and support groups such as the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Raising Special Kids, Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona and many disability-specific support groups.

The Event Calendar, also located through the website, is an excellent way to keep current on upcoming events from month-to-month. Events include family support, special education updates, advocacy training, and more. The Parent Information Network Specialists utilize this calendar to publicize PIN trainings held around the state. Please visit the EAPN website: www.azedapn.org.

Secondary Transition Planning Life after High School

by Teri Rademacher



Since the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), schools are being challenged to think differently about transition planning. This change came about due, in part, to the disappointing national statistics reported to the federal government regarding the percentage of students with disabilities that were graduating from high school with a diploma. Statistics show that students, who graduate with a diploma, improve their likelihood of employment and/or post secondary education opportunities. It is important that we strive to improve outcomes for students.

One of the changes brought about by the reauthorization was the age at which transition services must be included in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in affect when a child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, transition services should be included in the IEP. Best practice is to begin this process when the student enters high school.

The IEP must include appropriate measureable post-secondary goals. Conversations with the student about his or her goals, dreams, and aspirations for life after high school will help in the development of those post-secondary goals. This is done in conjunction with age-appropriate transition assessments which are designed to identify possible careers based upon a student's strengths and interests. These measureable post-secondary goals must address training/education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills.

One of the most challenging aspects of writing measureable post-secondary goals is that they are not "measured" until after the student has exited (aged out, dropped out, or graduated). This is quite different from the IEP goals that have been a part of a student's special education since they were determined eligible. Teachers were charged with monitoring and documenting progress and parents were accustomed to receiving those progress reports at regular intervals throughout the school year. Post-secondary goals are "measured" one year later, after the student has exited.

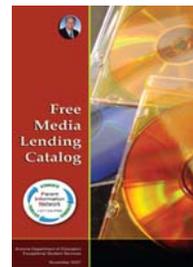
Once the post-secondary goals have been written, the next step is to develop a coordinated set of activities that will support the skill development of the student and align with the post-secondary goals. These activities can include, but are not limited to: instruction, related services, community experiences, and independent living skill development. The IEP team must also identify the courses of study the student will need to achieve those measureable post-secondary goals. For example, if a student is looking at a career in early childhood education he/she would most likely be interested in taking the child development courses (courses of study) offered at the high school, and perhaps be involved in the preschool program (coordinated set of activities) on campus.

For more information about assessments, career development, writing measureable post-secondary goals, and the outcomes, visit the Arizona Department of Education website at www.ade.state.az.us/ess/SpecialProjects/transition. Click on the "Professionals" tab to find a wide array of information about career development, assessments and guides. Under the "Resources" tab, you will find presentations about post-school outcomes and writing measureable post-secondary goals.

The Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC) offers many documents that provide parents and students with information about various post-secondary options including college, vocational education, independent living, and community participation. Visit the PINC online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or call 1-877-230-PINS (7467). You may also contact your PIN Specialist listed on page four.

Coming to a TV Screen Near You Free Media Lending Library Resources

by Teri Rademacher



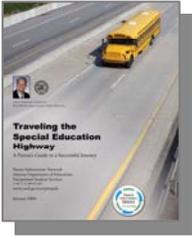
The Parent Information Network (PIN) maintains a Media Lending Library that contains several videos with information regarding transitions. While the majority of the videos focus on secondary transition, one of them is about the middle to high school transition. Here is a brief summary of each of the videos.

Transitions to High School – This is an instructional video that is often used by regular and special education administrators to assist students in becoming effective self-advocates. It also assists them in planning their transition to middle or high school. This video is 44 minutes in length and the target audience is 6th to 9th graders.

Transitions to Postsecondary Learning – In this video presentation, eight students with learning disabilities and/or ADD discuss the transition from high school to postsecondary learning environments. It is 48 minutes in length and provides the viewer with an overview of how the brain works and what life functions can be affected if portions do not work properly; including how that might impact the student seeking a postsecondary education.

Success at Work: Transitions to Employment – Six high school students/graduates with learning disabilities discuss their successful transition to work. They talk about their learning strengths and needs, the power of acceptance, how they prepared to enter the workforce, and the importance of self advocacy at work. This video is 56 minutes in length.

All of these resources are available, for loan at no cost to you, through the Parent Information Network. The Media Lending Library resources are often available in both VHS and DVD. If you need a specific format, please let us know when submitting your request. To check on availability and request a reservation form, please call (928) 679-8102 or send us an e-mail at PINS@azed.gov.



The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) requires schools to provide parents of a child with a disability a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice (PSN) to learn about parental rights and special education procedures. *Traveling the Special Education Highway* is a guide and is not intended to replace the PSN. This guide provides valuable information to compliment the PSN and help parents fully understand their rights. The guide includes practical tips on Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings, following the chain-of-command, and how to document your child's special education journey. For a copy of *Traveling the Special Education Highway (GR10)*, contact the PIN Specialist in your region listed below or email your request to PINS@azed.gov.

Name or Address Change?

Network News goes out to over 4,000 parents, service providers, agencies and schools. We need to continuously update our mailing list to stay current. We would also like to know if you are a parent, provider, or educator. In addition, you now have the option to receive your copy of the *Network News* via the U. S. Mail or electronically via e-mail. To update and/or correct your information and note your preference for U. S. Mail or email, please contact the PIN toll-free number at 1-877-230-PINS (7467) or PINS@azed.gov. You may also contact your Regional PIN Specialist below.

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For more information contact the PIN/Child Find Coordinator: Becky Raabe, (928) 679-8106, or Becky.Raabe@azed.gov.

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